

The Home Department

Conducted by
Helen Watts McKee

Spring Days

Old Winter's storms, that swept
athwart the sky
With dismal wailings, seek their
arctic home;
And with a graceful shyness, drawing
nigh,
Young Spring just ventures o'er
our fields to roam.
And as the sunshine paints with
golden light
Hill, wood and valley with a
brighter glow,
The feathered songsters wing their
northern flight
To fields just 'merging from their
robe of snow.

*t needs no clang of bells, no organ
peal,
No voice of eloquence to wake our
love,
But like the springing flowers each
heart may feel,
'Mid fair, green fields and shin-
ing sky above,
That there are nobler ends to be
attained
Than bards have sung or prophe-
sies foretold;
Here, pure, unspotted, bloodless and
unstained,
Are richer fields than countless
mines of gold.

—C. B. Thrasher.

A Chance to Do Kindness

We have several letters from readers of our page, who tell us they are living on homestead lands in an unsettled part of the country, and find it hard to provide for the wants of their families in the matter of clothing. There are school children among them, as well as grown people, and they would be glad if some one having discarded clothing would send it to them. In the matter of applying to societies who profess to do such work, it seems useless to ask the favor, as we are quickly told that each community has its own poor. But there may be private families who, clubbing together, might fill one or more boxes and send to these people. The names and addresses will be furnished, if evidence of good faith and intention to send the necessary aid are given. Who will be first to write me? Remember—"Inasmuch as ye have done it unto the least of these . . . ye have done it unto Me." It will be necessary, of course, that the senders shall pay the freight on these boxes.

Easter Customs

After the unusual conditions of discomfort which have prevailed during the past long, stormy winter, it is a relief to turn to thoughts of Eastertide and spring. But, like everything else, the customs have changed, and the confectioners' shops are filled with endless varieties of Easter eggs and toys, leaving but little for the ingenuity of the child. In days not so very long past, each child was allowed a number of eggs to color, and where half a dozen children were allowed to get together and do the coloring, there was always plenty of interest and fun. Instead of the homely dyes made from household stores, skins of onions, bits of bright calico or cambric, or other household "dye-stuffs," we have now the package dyes, cheap enough, and satisfactory, and rabbits, chicks, ducklings, and other pretty Easter decorations to be had very

cheaply, ready at hand. But many children still enjoy coloring the eggs in the old way, with mother to watch over the work and aid by suggestions. There was nothing prettier for the Easter breakfast table than the dish of colored eggs bearing many and varied colorings and often the names of the family. In the days past, children were taught to think, and do, and they enjoyed the results of their labor and thought.

Your Own Reference Book

There is one thing that it does not pay to either borrow or lend, and that is the reference book. If it is a good one, it is always in demand where it belongs; one never knows what a day may bring forth, and a good, reliable reference book, covering a large number of subjects, should be at hand for any emergency. It does not pay to lend it, because just when you want it, some neighbor has borrowed it, and you feel "like saying things" because it is not at hand. It does not pay to borrow it, for you can not possibly keep it all the time, neither can you copy the things you want to keep. So, the very best thing to do is to have one of your own. The "scrap-book habit" is a good thing to cultivate, and by saving clippings on subjects in which you are interested, and pasting them in books, you have an invaluable reference book, which you should never lend, and surely you should never borrow a scrap-book of any kind. A scrap-book, at best, is fragile, and must be handled with care. There are so many times that we want information just at the moment, and can not wait for it until we can get it from our favorite editor, while, if we clip the directions or recipe or formula, and paste it where we can reach it, no time is lost. There are many reference books, treating in a plain, reliable manner, of the housewife's difficulties, from attic to cellar, and these cost from 50 cents to several dollars each. Among the inexpensive ones, are the bulletins issued by the experiment stations, or by the agricultural department, and if you watch the advertising columns, you will find many booklets offered free for the asking, in which you will find much excellent information. These bits of information are, of course, collected and given out in order to advertise the various merchandise, machinery, or other matters of which they treat, but they are gotten up by experts in the lines exploited, and are well worth having and saving.

The Dried Fruits

Dried apricots are of a higher food value than the fresh fruit, and stimulating to the appetite through the flavor and pretty color when properly cooked, acting also as a mild laxative. It can be used for filling for pies, for stews with sugar, for dumplings, shortcakes, and in many other ways. When stewed with sugar it makes a very excellent conserve.

Cooking dried fruit should be done in such a manner as to preserve every atom of flavor and restore it as nearly as possible to a condition resembling fresh fruits before cooking. It should be picked over carefully, removing any spotted, or suspicious looking pieces, taking special pains not to leave anything that will suggest "worms;" then put the fruit

into plenty of cold water, washing it quickly and thoroughly, piece by piece, if necessary; transfer to a colander, let drain, then rinse through a second water, wasting no time about it. For most of fruits, a soaking of ten to twelve hours is necessary to plump the pieces, and this should be done in a clean vessel with plenty of clean water, with a cloth covering to keep out the dust and admit the air. When soaked sufficiently, take the fruit out by handfuls and put into the cooking vessel, allow the water in which it has soaked to settle, then drain it off carefully, leaving the dregs, and pour over the fruit. Cook in this water, and if not enough, more may be added, as there should be sufficient juice on the cooked fruit to cover it. Boil gently until tender, and add any sugar or spices just a few minutes before it is to be removed from the stove. Apples, apricots, peaches, prunes, may all be prepared in this way, and can be made very appetizing indeed. Raisins, grapes, cherries, and all dried berries are excellent treated in this way. Delicious butters can be made of the fruits by cooking as directed, then passing through a coarse sieve or colander, and stewing down until as dry as wanted, stirring either constantly, or frequently, as the fruit may call for.

The Vacuum Cleaner

Several housewives have asked for some information regarding this new method of house-cleaning, but I can tell them very little from personal knowledge. At the household shows, and the salesrooms, they are demonstrated, but the floor tests at such places are by no means conclusive as to their value, especially in the hands of the housewife where the cleaner is expected to draw dust from under a carpet, pick up bits of flat paper, lint, hair, trash, flattened and stamped into the carpet, and to remove germ-laden dust from household furnishings without destroying through too great suction the fabrics and textures of the upholstering, or draperies. To operate even the easiest of the hand-cleaners, one must have about as much strength for the work as a small electric motor can supply, and it calls for hard work—harder than a delicate woman can give, and in nearly every instance, for the best results, there must be a second person to act as helper. Unless these conditions can be met, one will obtain more satisfactory results with one of the sweepers, of which there are some excellent ones on the market. There are piston hand-cleaners on the market which weigh about five pounds, and can be used by one person, but these are but little more satisfactory than the best carpet-sweepers, and of course will not do the work of the big, expensive cleaners used by professionals, and in large buildings.

The Homely Rhubarb

Long before the village housewife or the home gardener sees the rhubarb large enough for use, the housewives of the large market towns will have grown tired of it; but the bunches of stalks sold over the counter, or from the huckster's wagon will not be near so well flavored as that used as soon as gathered. The withered, wilted stalks will have lost something; so

the home-grown will amply repay the waiting. After awhile, it can be made into jellies, jams, or vinegars, or put up in sealed jars for use in the winter. If you have none of it growing, do not fail to set out a few thrifty roots this spring.

"High Cost of Living"

When discussing the popular subject of "high cost of living," it is well to remember that it is not the amount wasted by one housewife that causes the trouble, but the countless wastes, small, but sure, in many houses and by careless or inexperienced, or over-busy housewives, that create the serious problem. Many women never will learn economy, or can "sense" the fact that waste makes want, because they are not so constituted as to realize such things. Men are just as wasteful as the women, and many of them demand dishes and foods which they will not touch in a "warmed-over" form. It is not always the fault of the housewife or the housekeeper; there are usually several factors.

Fashion Notes

The process of mercerizing cotton, until recently unknown, has brought to market whole lines of new materials unexcelled for beauty and fineness of finish. Mercerized batiste, which is exquisitely soft and beautiful; dimity, both plain and barred; rainsook, an old-time favorite; substantial long-cloth; and many more are here to choose from. The laces and embroideries have kept pace with the general improvements, and their application gives to the garment a finish hitherto impossible to attain. Hand embroidery is much used, and transfer patterns are cheap and easy of application, so many women are now doing their own embroidery.

The popular Dutch neck is now no more; the new cut has a straight line coming just to the neck, back and front, and running together in a point on each shoulder, leaving a part of the shoulders bare.

Collars in general will be narrower, the extremely high ones not appearing any more. The new styles are more comfortable.

The new skirts are most of them made with three or four gores, many of them showing the one-sided effect; tunics are shown in a variety of lines. The ugly tight skirts seem to be going out of style, and while the skirt is still straight and narrow, they are now two and a quarter yards around the lower edge. It is predicted that there will be an early return to the normal waist line.

Another change is from back to front fastening in the new gowns. For the summer, all tub dresses will have front fastenings, while many others will have the same style. Many gowns and dresses will button from neck to hem of garment.

White shirtwaists will again be in favor, and this is especially pleasing to the woman who likes to be clean, as a visit to the laundry will be all that is necessary for freshness and cleanliness.

Washing a Sweater

In order to prevent the garment shrinking, it must be very carefully washed. Soap must not be rubbed on it; to make a suds, slice a bar of good white soap and pour over it a quart of boiling water; as soon as softened stir well until dissolved, then add two gallons of soft tepid water. Shake the sweater well, turn it wrong side out and shake again; then having dislodged all the dust and loose dirt, put it into the suds and allow it to soak for ten minutes or more to loosen the dirt; dip it up and down carefully, working it through the hands, but do not wring it. Squeeze it as you work it. When